

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 AGR-05 SP-02 L-03 H-02 CIAE-00

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R 042130Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3095

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMCONSUL BELIZE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EAGR, EPAP, CS

SUBJECT: 1976 MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

REF: STATE 51112

1. SUMMARY. COSTA RICA GREATLY APPRECIATES THE U.S. ACTION IN PROVIDING FOR REALLOCATION OF MEAT QUOTAS WITHIN THE CENTRAL AMERICA/CARIBBEN AREA. THE GOCR EXPECTS TO BE ABLE TO SIGN THE VRS AGREEMENT VERY SOON AND HOPES THAT THE REGIONAL REALLOCATION POSSIBILITIES WILL HELP COSTA RICA TO AVOID THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE A SEVERE EXCESS SUPPLY OF MEAT FOR EXPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF GAVE AIDE MEMOIRE MARCH 4 TO VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS VICTOR HUGO ROMAN SUMMARIZING SALIENT POINTS
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OF REFTEL. ROMAN SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS EXTREMELY

CONCERNED ABOUT THE SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCE IT FORESEES BETWEEN AVAILABILITY OF MEAT FOR EXPORT AND MEAT MARKETING POSSIBILITIES, AND HE WAS THEREFORE MOST APPRECIATIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT'S DECISION TO PROVIDE FOR A REALLOCATION OF SHORTFALLS WITHIN THE CENTRAL AMERICA/CARIBBEAN AREA.

3. THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES THAT COSTA RICA WILL HAVE AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT THIS YEAR 65 TO 67 MILLION POUNDS OF MEAT. WITH A QUOTA OF ONLY 53 MILLION POUNDS, THIS LEAVES A GAP OF 12 TO 15 MILLION POUNDS OF MEAT THAT MIGHT BE WITHOUT A MARKET, EVEN WITHOUT COUNTING WHATEVER QUANTITIES OF COSTA RICAN MEAT WAS IN BONDED WAREHOUSES IN THE U.S. AT THE END OF 1975 AND WILL COUNT AGAINST THE 1976 QUOTA. ROMAN HOPES THAT THERE WILL BE SUFFICIENT SHORTFALLS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WITHIN THE REGION TO ABSORB THAT QUANTITY OF MEAT, AND EXPRESSED INTEREST IN KNOWING WHEN THE USG IS LIKELY TO MAKE THE INITIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SHORTFALLS.

4. ROMAN INDICATED THAT HE BELIEVES THAT COSTA RICA WILL BE PREPARED TO SIGN A VRS AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. HE SAID "WE CAN GO AHEAD AND SIGN AND THEN KEEP TALKING ABOUT THE PROBLEM." HE ALSO SAID THAT HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD TO LIMIT PUBLICITY BUT HE WARNED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF LEAKS FROM INDUSTRY SOURCES WHO WOULD HAVE TO BE INFORMED. HE OBSERVED THAT AN ARTICLE HAD ALREADY APPEARED IN LA NACION THAT VERY MORNING BEMOANING THE SERIOUS PREDICAMENT OF COSTA RICAN MEAT PRODUCERS WHO PROBABLY WILL HAVE USED UP THEIR QUOTAS BY AUGUST AND BE LEFT WITH 60,000 ANIMALS UNSOLD. THE ARTICLE SPECULATED THAT THE QUOTA FOR THIS YEAR WILL PROBABLY BE A BIT LESS THAN 53 MILLION POUNDS AND OBSERVED THAT COSTA RICA HAS ALREADY SHIPPED 23 MILLION POUNDS OF MEAT TO THE U.S. THIS YEAR. ROMAN EMPHASIZED THAT EARLY AND ACCURATE PUBLIC INFORMATION IS NECESSARY TO PREVENT MEAT PACKERS FROM CREATING AN AURA OF PESSIMISM WHICH WOULD CAUSE CATTLEMEN TO SELL THEIR ANIMALS AT TOO LOW A PRICE.

5. EMBOFF ASKED ROMAN IF HE HAS HAD ANY FURTHER WORD ABOUT SALES POSSIBILITIES IN EUROPE. ROMAN SAID THAT NO REPLY HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM FRANCE ON THE QUOTATIONS PROVIDED BY COSTA RICA. HE REMAINS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEVELOPING A VIABLE MARKET IN EUROPE. HE STATED THAT AFTOSA-INFECTED COUNTRIES SUCH AS ARGENTINA, URUGUAY AND COLOMBIA ARE OFFERING MEAT TO THE UEOUROPEAN MARKET AT \$500 PER TON LOWER THAN THE PRICE AT WHICH COSTA RICA WOULD OFFER MEAT. TODMAN

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